(b) if so, now tar it reflects a clear departure from India's often repeated stand including that spelt out in Parliament's resolution on the subject?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Government have seen a Pakistan press report to this effect.

(b) It has already been clarified that the Prime Minister did not make these remarks attributed to him in a Pakistan newspaper. Government is committed to upholding the Constitution of India. The unity and territorial integrity of India shall not be compromised. There is no change in Government's position regarding Pakistan's forcible and illegal occupation of a part of the territory of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Indo-China Talks

2695. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a statement of Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan to the effect that talks with India on two countries border dispute would resume after being suspended following New Delhi's nuclear blast last year;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereon; and

(c) the time by when talks are likely to resume?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRl JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) Government have seen reports on China's Foreign Minister, Tang Jiaxuan's Press Briefing on March 7, 1999. We seek friendly, co-operative, good neighbourly and mutually beneficial relationship with China, our largest neighbour on the basis of Panchsheel. We remain committed to the process of dialogue to resolve outstanding issues. The two sides are currently engaged in finalising the dates for convening the next meeting of the Joint Working Group. The meeting is likely to be held in Beijing in the coming weeks.

पाकिस्तान के प्रधान मंत्री की भारत-यात्रा

2696. **श्री राजूभाई ए0 परमार :** क्या विदेश मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या पाकिस्तान के प्रधान मंत्री ने भारत की यात्रा की इच्छा व्यक्त की हैं, और

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या हैं ?

विदेश मंत्री (श्री जसवन्त सिंह) : (क) और (ख) भारत के प्रधानमंत्री ने पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री को भारत की यात्रा पर आने का आमत्रंण दिया और इस बात की संभावना हैं कि यह यात्रा परस्पर सुविधाजनक समय पर होगी।

भारत से सहयोग मांगा जाना

2697. **श्री राजूभाई ए0 परमार :** क्या विदेश मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या पाकिस्तान सरकार ने भारत के स्पेशनल प्रोटेक्शन ग्रुप की तर्ज पर विशेष पुलिस बल का गठन करने के लिए भारत सरकार के सहयोग मांगा हैं,

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या हैं, और

(ग) इस संबंध में सरकार की क्या प्रतिक्रिया हैं ?

विदेश मंत्री (श्री जसवन्त सिंह) : (क) जी, नहीं।

(ख) और (ग) प्रश्न नहीं उठते।

Issue of passports from Hyderabad

2698. SHRI C. RAMACHAN DRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTER NAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the number of passport applications pending with the Regional Passport Office in Hyderabad;

(b) whether it is a fact that thousands of people have to visit Hyderabad to pursue their applications;

(c) what steps are proposed to ease the situation; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) The number of applications pending for issue of passports with Passport Office, Hyderabad as on 31.3.1999 is 30,018.

(b) Approximately 200 persons visit Passport Office, Hyderabad every day to follow up on their applications.

(c) and (d) The measures taken to expedite processing of passport applica tions include computerisation of proces sing procedures; provision of a tele-cn-quiry system; enhancing the validity of passports to 20 years; provision for dis patch of passports by speed post and issue of passport on an over-due basis where police reports arc not received during the prescribed time limit of four weeks.

India's relations with Taiwan

2699. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is our policy on relations with Taiwan;

(b) arc there any Indians detained in Taiwan;

(c) if so, how many 'of them and on what grounds;

(d) whether it is a fact that any person has been detained in connection with a ship accident near Taiwanese coast; and

(c) If so, what action has Government taken so far to getting the release expedited?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Government of India do"not maintain any official or diplomatic relations with the "Republic of China". Government facilitates non-official economic, trade and cultural links to enhance trade, tourism and investment.

(b) and (c) According to the information available, ten Indian nationals are presently detained in Taiwan on various charges.

(d) Two Indian seamen, namely. Captain Raj Kumar Goel and Shri Yoganarasimha Dodla arc facing trial in a court of law in connection with a collision of their ship. MV Kasuga-I, registered in Panama and being managed by Univan Ship Management Limited. Hong Kong, with a Taiwanese fishing boat on 5 Feb-rary 1996 about 17 nautical miles off the coast of Taiwan, in which only one of the twenty nine crew members on the fishing vessel was reported to have survived. The two seamen are now free on bail though they cannot leave Taiwan until the court proceedings arc settled.

(e) Through the good offices of the India-Taipei Association in Taipei (ITA). contact was maintained with the Captain and other crew members of MV Kasuga-I throughout the period of their detention and the court proceedings. The Director General of the India-Taipei Association office in Taipei as also other representatives of that office attended the court proceedings in person and otherwise rendered necessary assistance to the Indian crew members. ITA officials met and made appropriate representations to the concerned authorities in Taiwan. Messrs Univan Ship Management Company were in direct touch with the Directorate General of Shipping, Ministry of Surface Transport, Government of India in regard to the substantive aspects of the case since this is the subject matter of the Directorate General of Shipping.

Immediately after the details of the accident became known, the Government submitted an affidavit claiming jurisdiction in the case in accordance with Article 97 of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982. This submission was not accepted. Another affidavit was then submitted on behalf of the Directorate General of Shipping by ITA in Taiwanese High Court further clarifying the issues in-volved.